

## Mayor's Report for Tuesday, March 26

### **Tax Appeal Coordinator.**

The Mayor is investigating the need for a temporary position of tax appeal coordinator to serve as a go-between between Martins Onskulis, Haines Borough Staff and taxpayers during the tax appeals process. This 3-4 month position would help coordinate the borough's public outreach previous to and during appeals, to serve as a contact for Onskulis when Onskulis is out of town and to assist Onskulis and staff to help the appeals season go smoothly. The need for such a position became apparent this week with Onskulis' notice that a pending tax assessment ordinance set for approval March 26 was problematic, and word from Onskulis that he was planning on coming here for a presentation in less than a week, requiring us to rush advertising of the presentation into this week's newspaper. CFO Jila Stuart says money for this position could go through a budget ordinance or the position could be an emergency hire.

### **Anti-Dumping Efforts.**

The mayor will be requesting through approval of an April budget amendment up to \$1,200 to advertise and provide pre-paid trash bags to residents who are financially struggling to pay for waste disposal. The mayor's rationale is that we all must eat and we are all compelled to legally dispose of waste that comes from the packaging of the food we buy. The cost of disposing of waste should not diminish the money people need to buy food. Under the mayor's proposal, bags will be available through the mayor and through Capt. Kevin Woods of the Salvation Army. To prevent abuse, recipients will be required to provide their names to receive bags. Without assembly approval, the mayor will use \$250 from his discretionary fund to provide bags.

### **First Friday at the Borough.**

Unless there is opposition from the assembly, starting Friday, April 5, I plan to open the municipal building on First Fridays from 5:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on a trial basis. I will host the event, set up and clean up, and use the mayor's discretionary fund to pay for snacks and non-alcoholic drinks. The purpose of this effort is to create a space to meet with our citizens in a fun and informal way and to make our constituents more comfortable with coming into their municipal building. I encourage staff and no more than 3 assembly members at a time to participate at their convenience.

### **Filling Seats on the Bald Eagle Preserve Council.**

I've written to Gov. Dunleavy asking that he fill vacant, voting seats on the Alaska Bald Eagle Preserve Advisory Council, as is required by the advisory council's by-laws. The three public, voting seats on the council filled by the governor's appointment include: a) a representative of a conservation organization, b) a representative of the Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee, c) a representative of business and industry. The fourth voting seat on the council belongs to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ex-officio (non-voting) seats on the council include Haines Borough Mayor, Haines Borough Assembly, Chilkat Indian Village, Chilkoot Indian Association, Klukwan, Inc., Department of Fish and Game, state Division of Forestry and state Division of Parks.

### **Future of Camping at Portage Cove state campground.**

I've written to state Department of Natural Resources commissioner, asking if the decision to close Portage Cove to camping is final, in light of the recent hire of a park ranger in Haines, as well as the hire of two park technicians. The letter also said that if the state is locked into its decision against camping there, the borough asks to enter into negotiations with the state for borough purchase of this site.

### **Downtown without Chris Thorgesen.**

After 10 years, developer Chris Thorgesen is leaving town. Thorgesen told me this week he has sold the Parts Place and Thor's Gym and will put his Main Street meadery for sale soon. He said he is leaving town as soon as he can and plans to move to the Lower 48. Starting in 2014, Thorgesen revived our downtown, purchasing and/or renovating the Elks Lodge, LAB Building, Coliseum Theater Building, and King's Store buildings, Haisler's Hardware building, Mountain View Motel building and Parts Place. Several of these buildings were unoccupied and boarded-up previous to Thorgesen's purchase. The withdrawal of Thorgesen's investment represents the loss of a champion for our Main Street. With his departure, the borough may need to become involved again in downtown development, including reviving our never-completed Downtown Revitalization Plan.

